

CTV CHANNEL 24  
Tues. 8:30 PM Sun. 10 AM

# STATEN ISLAND JOURNAL

...A weekly TV News Program



Staten Island  
Community Television

MAY 24 1993

## I. Introduction

Staten Island Journal is a thirty minute weekly news program carried on public access channel 24 on Staten Island since April 1988. Additionally there have been an average of three special shows per year which run either one hour or 90 minutes. Several of these have been live.

Staten Island Journal is produced by members of the Video Task Force of the Staten Island Coalition for Survival, which includes eight community organizations. The staff includes four people in Washington, DC, who cover some news of interest to Staten Island.

The program emphasizes environmental and political news, but is broad enough to have covered an international frisbee tournament held on Staten Island several years ago. In 1992 we had two staff members at the Republican Convention, four at the Democratic, two at the New Alliance Party, and two at the Libertarian convention.

The Video Task Force would be interested in having Staten Island Journal made available through DBS noncommercial broadcasts under rules similar to those for public access cable.

## II. Definition of Provider of DBS Service

We believe that the term "provider" should apply to that entity which provides reception equipment to the public, such as a descrambler. While this may not be the corporate entity which owns the satellite, or operates it, from the point of view of the public, the "provider" is the one they deal with.

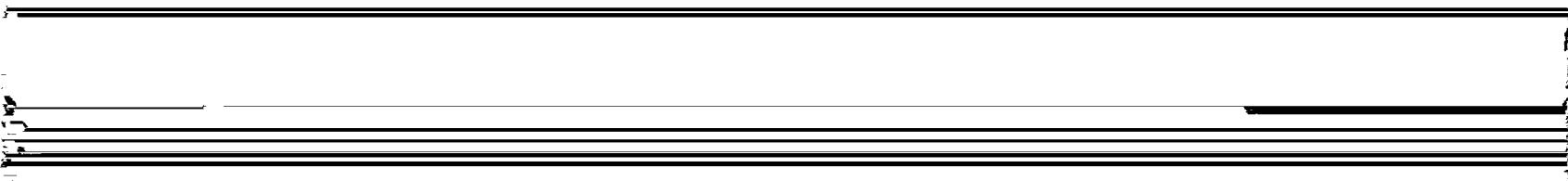
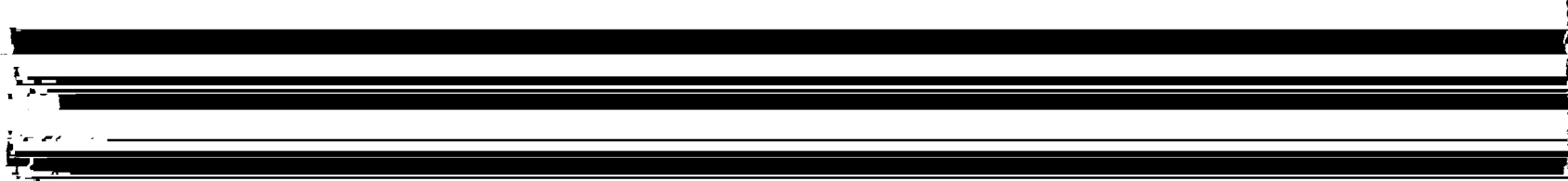

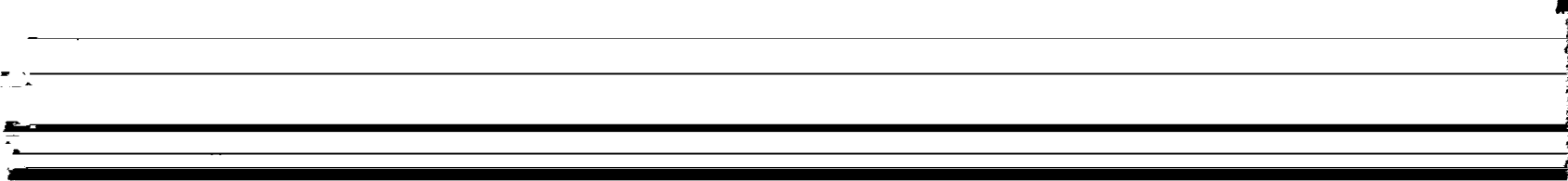
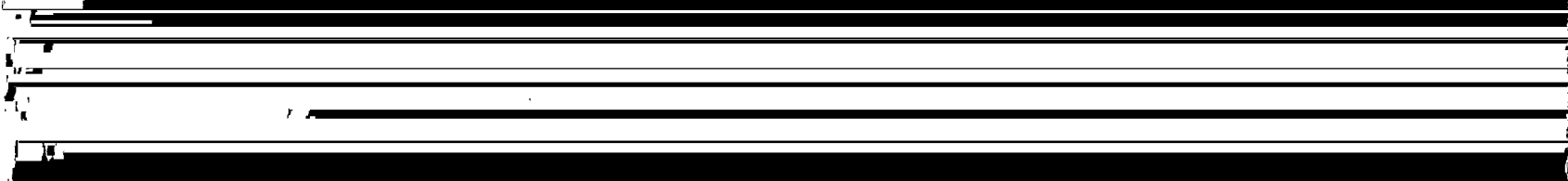
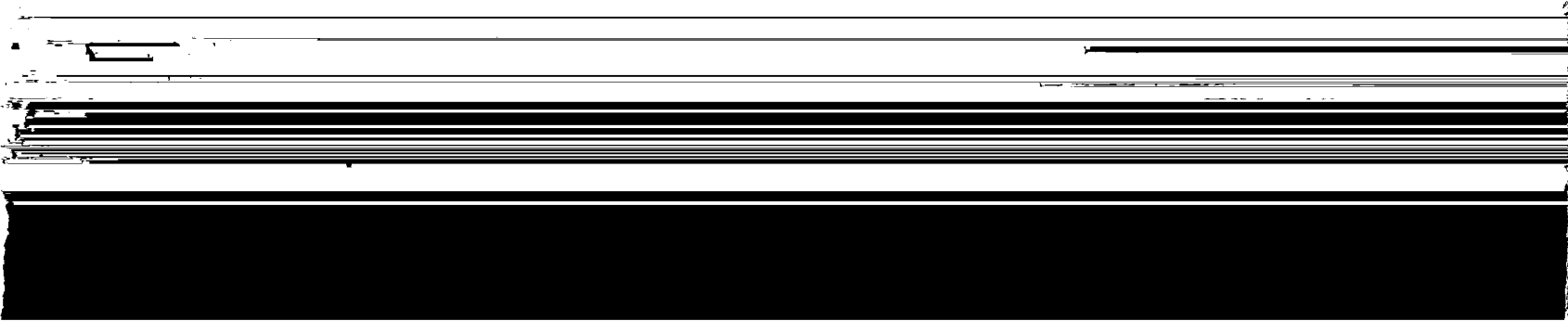
Our interest lies with the Part 100 DBS licensee, as these will be the ones with the largest number of channels, and the least expensive equipment for the home viewer.

With reference to the question in paragraph 16, we believe that as regards content, the licensee and provider should both be treated as common carriers of public interest programming of the type we discuss below.

We now address the issues raised in Paragraph 29, as these are the primary concern of our organization. We feel that the 4 to 7% allocation for noncommercial, educational, and informational programming should be done by assigning certain defined channels to such purpose. If done instead by blocks of time, this would result in either assignment of undesirable times, or if blocks including prime time are mandated by the commission, to possibly unfair treatment of the provider through loss of advertising revenue. Also, by establishing assigned channels, the viewing public will

know that certain types of programs are to be found on certain parts of the dial.

The number of channels counted, by Paragraph 39, is the number



satellite were to fail unexpectedly. This would lead to a mad scramble for the appropriate channels on other DBS satellites. In fact, there will be an orderly scramble as a DBS reaches the end of its expected life.

Programmers are not likely to be interested in which of the many DBS satellites they are carried on. Thus the proposed DBS access entity would handle the details of getting the programmer on a suitable satellite, presumably selecting one with a time slot open that is nearest the programmers' choice.

The DBS access entity should be funded in a manner similar to that used on many cable systems. That is to say, that a small portion of each subscriber's fees be allocated to the DBS access entity. The only cost to noncommercial programmers should be minimal.

At this point it is impossible to predict how quickly time slots on noncommercial channels will fill. However, over a period of years this is likely to be a problem as many different institutions begin to take advantage of the DBS. We would like to recommend here that before any program be transmitted on the noncommercial DBS channels, the programmer have a minimum of one year experience on either cable or a standard broadcast channel. If this is too restrictive, then if there are multiple claimants for the only available prime time opening, the prior broadcast experience be used as a selection factor. The reason for this is that experience has shown all too often that there are programmers who produce just one or two shows and then vanish. However, requiring that a programmer provided an entire thirteen show (or any other number) series completed before allowing them access is blatantly unfair to a news show, such as Staten Island Journal.

Paragraph 45: We have no objection to a DBS provider broadcasting commercial material on a noncommercial channel up until the moment when noncommercial material ready for broadcast is actually in hand. This could lead to a noncommercial channel even briefly carrying both types of programming.

Paragraphs 46 to 50: We believe the regime envisioned by these paragraphs would restrict DBS to only the wealthiest, such as PBS, a few churches, health care providers and universities. This would be destructive of the goal of diversity. Staten Island Journal's "budget" consists of the costs of mailing tapes from our Washington bureau for inclusion in the show. The budget of the sponsoring

Staten Island Coalition for Survival could never support the 50% of costs proposed. The Coalition has eight member organizations with about 375 people in them. Staten Island Journal has been rich in reaping awards, but certainly has no money. We remain on cable access thanks to the volunteers who do the show, plus the rules of cable access which have the costs of edit booths, equipment, etc. covered by a small share of the fees of cable subscribers. This fee share is collected by Staten Island Cable, and paid over to a separate cable access corporation, which runs the studio, edit facilities, etc. of and for the access programmers.

We firmly believe that a similar arrangement should be made for the noncommercial, access channels of the DBS. Ultimately the DBS access entity might pay cable access facilities around the country a small fee for shows that are edited there that go to the satellites. This seems a lot more feasible than expecting the DBS access entity to provide edit facilities that are reasonably convenient all over the United States.

Perhaps the Commission might establish a two tier access fee structure, in which programmers who have a real budget pay the 50% or whatever, and those who operate as does Staten Island Journal are handled as we have outlined above.

Certainly the concept of access and of maximum diversity is not adequately addressed when programmers are expected to pay 50% of the costs to DBS providers who are presumably making significant profits on 93 to 96% of their channels.

We deliberately make no comment on what should constitute "direct costs", since the proposed costs would forever bar Staten Island Journal, and similar programmers, from DBS.